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# SCHOOL GARDENS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON CURRENT PRACTICES IN FLANDERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

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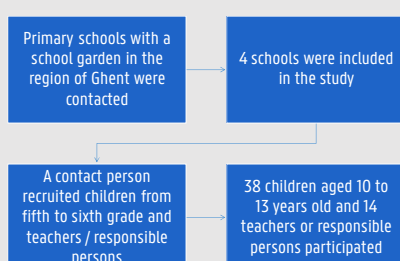
## Introduction & Aim

- Sufficient intake of fruit and vegetables at primary school age contributes to the prevention of non-communicable diseases (e.g. type 2 diabetes and chronic heart disease).
- A school garden project is an experiential learning approach with beneficial effects on children's willingness to taste vegetables, preferences for fruits and vegetables and knowledge of fruit and vegetables.
- It is important to gain insight in children's and teachers' perceptions towards a school garden, as they guarantee the sustainability of school gardens.
- This qualitative study examines the implementation and the perception of teachers/responsible persons and children towards the implementation of their school garden.

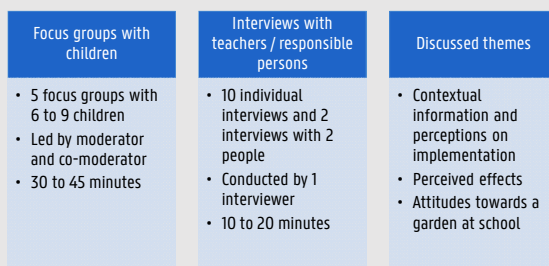


## Methods

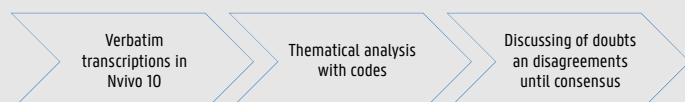
### Recruitment strategy



### Procedure



### Analysis



## Results

### Characteristics of participating schools

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Location in Ghent	City center	Suburban region	Suburban region	City center
Type of garden	Garden in planters	garden in planters	garden in solid ground	Garden in solid ground
Surface of the garden (m <sup>2</sup> )	6	4	50	160
Number of years the garden was in use	1	1	10	7

### Results

#### Perceptions on implementation of a school garden

- Idea to start a school garden came from teachers, with the aim of teaching children about gardening and vegetables
- Help from external organizations at start-up is important
- Having an internal person responsible for the school garden is essential
- Free moments for voluntary work and class-bound moments
- Difficulties with maintaining the garden during winter and summer holidays
- Not a lot of courses on gardening and vegetables as they do not often occur in curricula
- Use of the harvest for cooking activities or selling it to parents

#### Perceived effects of a school garden

- Children memorize a lot of information about gardening
- Children get to know new vegetables and are aware of the origin
- More willingness to taste vegetables
- Children have increasing interest in vegetables
- No change in vegetable consumption expected as parents are not involved

#### Attitudes towards a school garden

- Teachers are positive and would recommend it to other schools
- Startup is not easy
- It can be a burden to teachers
- Children were positive about the school garden: it brings color and greenery, they can be outside
- Positive reactions about cooking activities
- There is not enough work for all children
- Children do not mention the school garden at home or to friends
- Children sometimes destroy the plants

## Conclusion

- It is important to raise awareness on the potential positive effects of a school garden on vegetable consumption of children
- There is a need to offer solutions to diminish the informational and organizational burden for teachers
- Parents should be involved in the entire process of a school garden, since they play a major role in children's health behavior

